

WHITEHALL'S DIRTY WAR

by Daphne Liddle

THE SECURITY service MI5 last week faced scathing criticism from High Court judges for its role in aiding and abetting torture and rendition and a few days later another secret Government unit was exposed as conducting a dishonest propaganda campaign against Al Qaeda.

Binyamin Mohammed, a young Ethiopian, was arrested, illegally detained and interrogated in Pakistan in 2002 and secretly flown by United States officers to Morocco to be tortured. Under torture Mohammed made a confession that he later withdrew.

Subsequently US officers transferred Mohammed to Afghanistan and then to their concentration camp at Guantanamo in Cuba and held for four years without charge or trial.

But now he is facing a "trial" before a military commission on charges that he conspired with Al Qaeda leaders to plan terror attacks on civilians.

His lawyers brought a

High Court case in London to force the British security services to divulge secret material still held that would help Mohammed prove that his confession was extracted under torture and therefore has no validity.

MI5 agents took part in the illegal interrogation of Mohammed on behalf of the American government. One officer, not named and known as Witness B, was so worried about incriminating himself that he refused to answer the judges' questions, even in private.

The court heard that this officer interrogated Mohammed in Pakistan, where he was held incommunicado and without ac-

cess to a lawyer. Later Mohammed was removed to Morocco where, he says, he was tortured by having his penis cut by a razor blade.

The full findings of the judges remain a state secret but Lord Justice Thomas and Mr Justice Lloyd concluded: "The conduct of the security service facilitated interviews by or on behalf of the United States when Mohammed was being detained by the United States incommunicado and without access to a lawyer. Under the law of Pakistan, that detention was unlawful."

The judges ruled that MI5 "continued to facilitate" the interviewing of Mohammed at the behest of the US, even after he was secretly "rendered" out of Pakistan. MI5 did this, the judges added, by providing information to America although the agents "must have appreciated" he was being detained and questioned in a



• Binyamin Mohammed.

facility which was "that of a foreign government".

They said that Witness B worked with the US "to the extent of making it clear to Mohammed that the UK government would not help him unless he co-operated fully with the US authorities". And they added: "The relationship of the UK government to the US

authorities in connection with Mohammed was far beyond that of a bystander or witness to the alleged wrongdoing".

But the ruling may not help Mohammed. His lawyers, Richard Stein of Leigh Day, said outside the court that although the Government was clearly committed to a fair trial and opposed to the practices of torture and extraordinary rendition but, "unfortunately when faced with the choice between the rule of law and upsetting its allies the Americans, it waives this commitment".

Clive Stafford Smith, the legal director of the human rights group Reprieve, commented: "Compelling the British government to release information that can prove Mr Mohammed's innocence is one obvious step towards making up for the years of

torture that he has suffered.

"The next step is for the British government to demand an end to the charade against him in Guantanamo Bay and return him home to Britain."

Since then a Home Office document leaked to the press revealed a Government-backed secret "counter terrorism" unit (Ricu) set up by former Home Secretary John Reid to feed stories to the BBC and other "respected" media carrying the message that Al Qaeda is steeply declining in strength.

The unit also uses the web to feed similar information into blogs, forums and discussion pages, posing as ordinary web users.

The propaganda claims that Al Qaeda has been "expelled" from vast areas of Iraq and Afghanistan and "is on the defensive throughout much of the rest of the world".

This is a curious ploy since previously the imperialist powers have had to exaggerate the size and power of Al Qaeda in order to justify the spurious "war on terror".

Al Qaeda never existed in Iraq before the imperialist powers invaded there.

Now the imperialists must claim that Al Qaeda is failing to justify its brutal wars against the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan – and perhaps to lay the ground for a face-saving retreat from these continuing wars that it cannot win and can no longer afford to sustain.

A defeat for the US and Israel

by our Arab Affairs Correspondent

NOW THAT THE DUST has settled in Georgia the repercussions of the Russian victory are being felt throughout the Middle East. On the Arab street the Russian intervention was seen not only as a defeat for an American proxy but also a humiliation for Israel, which until recently was beefing up the Georgian military machine.

The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, says it will recognise the newly independent republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the Israelis are now rapidly distancing themselves from the Western debacle in the Caucasus, claiming that their military assistance to Georgia ended several months ago.

In a speech marking second anniversary of the last war with Israel, Lebanese Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah mocked

Israel's political and military leadership. The Lebanese resistance leader noted that the Georgian army had been trained by Israeli Brigadier General Gal Hirsh, who was a commander in the 2006 Israeli-Lebanon conflict saying: "Gal Hirsch, who was defeated in Lebanon, went to Georgia and they too lost because of him."

"Relying on Israeli experts and weapons, Georgia learnt why the Israeli generals failed," he declared. "What happened in Georgia is a message to all those the Americans are seeking to entangle in dangerous adventures."

And this sentiment was echoed by President Bashar al Assad of Syria who flew to the Black Sea resort of Sochi for talks with Russia's President Medvedev last week. President Assad said he "fully supported" Russia in the Caucasus war. "Georgia started this crisis, but the West is blaming Russia," he declared.

The talks, scheduled long before the Georgian crisis began, covered the whole spectrum of Syrian-Russian relations, including the cru-

cial issue of maintaining Syria's defence capability.

But Al Assad made it clear that weapons sales would top the agenda in Sochi. "Of course military and technical co-operation is the main issue," he said. "Weapons purchases are very important. I think we should speed it up. Moreover, the West and Israel continue to put pressure on Russia".

Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov said his country was ready to supply Syria with new defensive arms that did not violate the balance of power in the world. But Russian media reports that Syria was willing to allow the deployment of Russian missile defence systems on Syrian territory were denied in Damascus and by the Russian ambassador in Tel Aviv. "There is no truth to media reports that Syria had agreed to deploy Iskander missiles on its territory," the official Syrian Arab News Agency said last Friday.

Israel and Syria are continuing to hold indirect talks in Turkey over the occupied Golan Heights that were seized by the Zionists in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. But Syr-

ian Foreign Minister Walid al Muallem said the talks had "regrettably" not progressed enough to lead to direct negotiations. Al Muallem said both sides were "serious" about moving forward indicating that one of the problems was determining the precise border that existed before the 67 war.

Part of the Golan Heights, including the provincial capital Quneitra, were liberated during the October 1973 Arab Israeli War and Syria is calling for an Israeli pull-out from all the territories seized in the 67 war, including a small strip of land on the coast of the Lake of Galilee which was part of the British Mandate of Palestine and administered by Syria from 1948 to 1967.

In Tel Aviv the Zionist parties are scrabbling around waiting for Premier Olmert, named a corruption scandal, to go after his bloc chooses a new leader in September and, in any case, no one expects a breakthrough this side of the American presidential elections

FUND

The mail was slightly heavier this week but with just a meagre £734.28 in the bag we've clearly got a fight on our hands to hit the £3,000 mark this month. First of all many thanks to the Vauxhall supporter who gave £100 and a veteran Manchester reader who sent in another £100. Special mention also go to the Metropolitan NCP comrades who collected £59.28 at last weekend's garden party, a Swansea supporter who sent in a tenner and a Yorkshireman who posted a fiver for the fighting fund. But the running total for August is now only £1,384.28 which means we've got to raise £1,615.72 in little more than seven days to keep the *New Worker* going!

The survival of the *New Worker* depends entirely on the support of its readers. Without it we would have folded long ago. We have kept our communist press rolling for over 30 years and we are determined to keep it going for as long as it takes to win the battle for peace and socialism. And we will with your help. Your donations are the life-blood of the struggle. Please send your contribution, big or small, to: *New Worker* Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

The day of the Democrats

BARAK Obama has been crowned at the Democrat convention in Denver and he's now set to challenge Republican John McCain in the US presidential race this November.

All bourgeois elections are the manipulation of the largest number of votes by the smallest number of people and this is no more so than in the United States. And as Marx famously said: "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie".

US politics are dominated by two bourgeois parties that reflect different trends and interests within the American ruling class. McCain and his fellow Republicans represent the most reactionary and aggressive sections of the American ruling class while the Democrats adopt liberal bourgeois reform programmes to win support from working people and the oppressed ethnic minorities in the United States.

Both parties are led by millionaires, which in practice is a prerequisite for high office, given the vast sums needed for election campaigns. Their platforms are drawn up by multi-millionaires to reflect the needs of their vested interests but disguise their aims with populist platitudes and token reforms to win support from the minority of American people who actually bother to register to vote.

Barack Obama is the first Black presidential candidate to have ever been chosen by an American ruling-class party and the Democrats believe he can mobilise the African-American community behind their ticket in the run-up to the election.

Obama's "hope, change and unity" campaign is aimed at the millions of Americans who want change; the millions angered at the criminal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which they pay for in their lives and taxes; the millions who are bearing the burden of the capitalist crisis and have been impoverished by Bush's neo-con policies. Organised labour is backing the Democrats and the Obama campaign has the support of some of the largest unions in America. But Obama is by no means assured of victory in November.

The American left, which is weak and divided, has differing approaches. The Communist Party (CPUSA) is backing the Democratic slate because they see the defeat of the Republicans as an essential first step in shifting the ground for further advance. They don't regard Obama as a "left" candidate in any way but argue that "none of the people's struggles — from peace to universal health care to an economy that puts Main Street before Wall Street — will advance if McCain wins in November".

The Workers World Party (WWP), which in the past has fielded presidential candidates of its own, is this time endorsing the candidacy of Cynthia McKinney, a black former Congresswoman from Georgia. The WWP know this will only win the protest vote but they also have no illusions about a Democrat victory. They say "should Obama win the election (a prospect that shouldn't be considered certain), the US imperialist ruling class will have a gifted Black politician to help them save their troubled empire. An Obama presidency as the face of an imperialist state will not change anything fundamental, but on the surface it will mark a change, a new situation".

While we cannot hope to influence the American left, nor indeed should we as it is a question solely for American working class, we need to heed the Workers World warning and have no illusions of what a future Obama administration would represent.

Bearing gifts

A black bear at Woburn Safari Park recently took a hubcap from one car and offered it to a driver whose car lacked hubcaps.

Azra Noonari had taken her two young children on a day trip to Woburn Safari Park driving a car with no hubcaps because they had been stolen. As she drove through bear and wolf enclosure, the car in front of her stopped.

"There was a bear in front of it, so I stopped too and started taking pictures," she said. "I saw it take a hubcap off the car then start walking towards us. I locked all the doors quickly; we didn't know what it would do."

"It put the hubcap down and then banged on the window, as if it was trying to get my attention. It was almost like it wanted to give me the wheel cap. Maybe the bear thought I needed the hubcap."

"My little boy was crying but my daughter was

Say no more

enjoying it. She was saying, 'Oh my God mummy, look what he's doing'."

Best seller

A Japanese novel written 79 years ago by Marxist writer Takiji Kobayashi in 1929 has recently hit the best seller list in Japan.

Kani Kosen (The Crab Ship) is the story of a fisherman working aboard a factory ship along with sea-hardened veterans, university students and poor farm boys — all beaten and exploited by sadistic foremen and greedy bosses. It has been likened to *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. Kobayashi was murdered by secret police after writing it.

In 1953 it was released as a paperback and for years it has ticked over selling about 5,000 a year, mainly to academics, libraries and socialists.

But now the country faces economic decline the

book's message has found a new following among workers facing hardship and half a million copies have been sold so far this year.

And the Japan Communist Party is reportedly recruiting 1,000 new members a month after general secretary Kazuo Shii recently berated Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda on television about the conditions of day temp workers.

Goddess entitled to school

The new revolutionary government of Nepal has ruled that a nine-year-old girl, Preeti Shakaya, must attend school in spite of being chosen as the "living goddess Kumari" at the age of three and locked in a palace.

She was to be worshipped until she grows up, when a new goddess is due to be chosen. But she will now retire at the end of the year after the country's Supreme Court ruled she has the right to go to school and that being

locked up in a palace is a violation of her rights.

Filthy rich

Republican presidential candidate John McCain recently said it took an annual income of \$5 million (£2.5 million) to be counted as truly rich.

But last week he was asked in an interview how many homes he owned. He paused for a moment and replied: "I think... I'll have my staff get back to you."

Suspicious

Police in Goettingen, Germany, last week arrested a novice monk after he tried to give money away as part of his religious training.

Shoppers raised the alarm when 37-year-old Daniel Weiss stood in a shopping centre giving away 50 Euro notes and blessing people in Goettingen. Police let him off after they had checked to see if the notes were forgeries.

Ten non-green bottles

THE PUBLIC sector union Unison last week staged a protest to expose the environmental madness of transporting bottled water all around Britain and importing it from as far away as Fiji, Norway, France and Tasmania.

Unison senior national officer Steve Bloomfield, with the other protesters, hung our 10 non-green bottles in Whitehall as a part of International Water Week.

The union showed just how far these bottles of water travel to reach Britain (or London, if produced in Britain), to highlight the environmental consequences of the bottled water industry.

Bloomfield said: "Some of our 10 non-green bottles have travelled from as far away as Tasmania and Fiji, and together they have clocked up some 40,000 kilometres."

"Environmentally this is madness — it takes up to a quarter a litre of oil and nine litres of water to produce every one-litre of bottled water."

"In the UK, we are lucky enough to have access to some of the best tap water in the world — but we still drink more than two billion bottles of water each year."

"Employers, staff and the

• Mains water costs a lot less and is just as good.

public need to get wise to their water footprint and ditch the bottle, get green, stay healthy and hydrated by making the switch to tap water."

Over the past 12 months, the bottled water industry has begun to shrink, with sales down by nine per cent to March this year.

Some Whitehall departments such as the Food Standards Agency, the Department for Food and Rural Affairs and

the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform have already banned the use of bottled water in meetings.

Many parliamentary meetings such as those at Downing Street have also followed suit.

But industry insiders still predict that sales will grow by 30 per cent between 2007-2012.

Unison's water@work

campaign aims to promote the benefits of drinking tap water, and to encourage as many employers as possible to provide their staff with safe, mains-fed drinking water.

For outdoor workers, Unison has produced a reusable, washable water bottle.

Mains tap water costs less than 1p per litre — bottled water routinely costs more than 150 times that price.

Government 'criminalises the young'

PROFESSOR Rod Morgan, former chair of the Youth Justice Board, last week accused the Government of being too quick to criminalise young people for petty offences where informal punishment could be more effective.

He described an "extensive net widening" of the use of summary powers such as cautions and on-the-spot fines and his report for King's College, London, urged assessment of the development.

The Ministry of Justice said there was a reluctance to bring young people to court unless necessary.

But new figures show that more than 1,000 children have been jailed for an average of six months each for breaching anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) since they were introduced in 2000.

Professor Morgan's report for the college's Centre for Crime and Justice Studies said: "There is a good deal of anecdotal evidence,

for example, that behaviour, particularly that of children and young people, is being criminalised which arguably would be better dealt with informally (school-related misbehaviour, for example) and in previous times was."

The trend towards pre-court summary justice should more incisively be scrutinised to ensure that justice is being meted out fairly and effectively.

It added: "The increased use of pre-court summary justice is one of the most im-

portant elements in the Government's strategy for modernising the criminal justice system.

"The implementation of the strategy has received virtually no research, inspectorial or parliamentary scrutiny."

"The trend towards pre-court summary justice should more incisively be scrutinised to ensure that justice is being meted out fairly and effectively. We cannot be wholly confident that this is so."

'Time to tax energy companies'

MORE THAN 80 MPs, including some ministerial aides have signed a petition circulated by the Compass Group calling on Prime Minister Gordon Brown to impose a one-off windfall tax on energy firms that have made huge profits from rising fuel prices.

The petition calls on the Government to use the money raised by this tax to help low income families who are having problems paying their fuel bills.

More MPs are expected to sign the petition after the end of the parliamentary summer recess.

A spokesperson for Number Ten said: "The position on tax is a matter for the chancellor and the Treasury. The Treasury receives a whole range of representations and of course will consider such representations in the normal way."

Seventy-five Labour MPs have publicly signed the Compass petition but the middle-of-the-road think tank says there are more than 80 because some signed after its website was last updated and others chose to remain anonymous.

Among signatories are

Stephen Pound, aide to welfare minister Stephen Timms, and Rob Marris, aide to Northern Ireland Secretary Shaun Woodward, who suggested to the *Times* that he would consider quitting if there was no change in policy.

The Government has previously said it is "looking at" all options but, while a windfall tax has not been ruled out, it is understood the prime minister is looking at an alternative levy on carbon emissions.

Labour MP Clive Betts, who is among those who have signed the petition, told BBC Radio Four's *Today* programme there was "overwhelming" support for a one-off tax among his parliamentary colleagues and the public.

He said companies were looking at more than 30 per cent increases in their profits, adding: "They are simply going to make much more money for doing absolutely nothing."

"I think it's reasonable for people to say 'Why should the wages and salaries and bonuses of the executives of these companies, which will be linked to their profits and their share prices, go up astronomically while the ordinary person

in the street is seeing their wages go up by two per cent and their energy bills going up by 30 per cent?'"

A YouGov poll commissioned by Compass showed that more than 67 per cent of people in Britain "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that a one-off tax should be levied on oil and gas companies. Even among Tory voters 57 per cent backed the idea.

John Cruddas MP said: "There are millions of people suffering from fuel poverty and it's the job of a Labour government to tackle that. Politically we also have to contrast that with the Tories."

Predictably the leaders of the energy companies were opposed and claimed that

such a "legalised raid" would discourage investment. David Porter, chief executive of the Association of Electricity Producers, added: "Every £1 million you take out of each company through this legalised raid is £1 million they have to raise elsewhere."

Labour MP Lindsay Hoyle has also started a Commons motion calling for a windfall levy on energy companies to be used to boost the winter fuel payment for pensioners. It was signed by 38 MPs, before they left for summer recess.

The "big three" energy firms – Shell, BP and British Gas – have recently posted huge profits. Shell made £4 billion in the second quarter of this year, up 4.6 per cent from 2007, while BP made £3.4 billion, a rise of six per cent. Centrica, which owns British Gas, made £992 million in the first half of this year, while raising prices for customers by 35 per cent.

Unite calls for Labour policy changes

THE GIANT union Unite, which has recently donated funds that helped to save the Labour Party from bankruptcy, last week demanded changes "at the highest level" to revive the party's chances in the next general election.

Documents leaked to the press reveal that a briefing note was sent to the Prime Minister by the Unite joint general secretaries – Tony Woodley and Derek Simpson – which spells out the union's demands and threatens to withdraw support for Brown.

The note follows reports of a private showdown between Brown and a delegation of the most senior officials from Unite. They went to see the Prime Minister because of the Government's disastrous slump in the opinion polls.

Since the 2005 general election Unite, which was formed from a merger of the Transport and General Workers' Union and Amicus, has given £11 million to the Labour Party, the largest from any single organisation, which has kept the bailiffs from the door.

The demands echo those made jointly by the major trade

unions in the run-up to the annual Labour policy forum in Warwick earlier this summer – where Brown brushed them aside.

The document says: "If replicated at a general election it would mean a near wipe out for Labour. The union's concern about the political direction of the Government, as well as the industrial concerns over continued calls for pay restraint in the public and private sectors while inflation busts through the Government's targets, have been put directly to Gordon Brown.

"They have been repeated across the media so our members should be in no doubt that Unite is making the case for change at the highest level."

The bluntness of the warning will alarm Brown's supporters as they have taken for granted that the unions will back the Prime Minister if there is a leadership challenge this autumn.

Baroness Jay, the former Cabinet minister and Leader of the House of Lords under Tony Blair, has described Brown as an electoral liability.

Black youths 'left to die'

DR DERRICK Campbell, an independent adviser to the Home Office, last week accused politicians of "leaving black youths to die" after the violent deaths of three young men within 24 hours in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and London.

Dr Campbell, who chairs the National Independent Advisory Group on Criminal Use of Firearms, said that funds earmarked for community cohesion were not going to the right organisations.

He revealed that some organisations which were successful in tackling such crime had suddenly had funding cut.

"And we have to ask the question whether there seems to be an acceptance that if another black youth is killed they are just another one that we don't have to worry about," he said.

Dr Campbell went on to say there was hard evidence from community groups in the Birmingham area that their funding was being cut – a situation which he said was reflected nationally.

He claims the Government is failing to ensure local councils get the money to the appropriate groups.

"Black youths within this country have been left to die," he added. "And that's a very strong statement but it's a statement that seems to be borne out through evidence about black youths who seem to be at the top of the list when it comes to our youngsters being killed," he said.

"Now we're asking very serious questions of national government and local government as to why it seems that resources that have been allocated for community cohesion and other activities have not been going to those organisations."

Sun shines on the *New Worker*

NEW WORKER supporters, friends and readers enjoyed the first reasonably sunny, warm, dry day for several weeks last Saturday in a south London back garden with the annual *New Worker* garden party in Charlton.

Comrades enjoyed good food and drink and discussion on topics ranging from the early Christian church and the spin-doctoring prowess of the Emperor Constantine, to current events in Pakistan, to home-brewed wine, to football matches and parking. A toddler also discovered that apples grow on trees.

The event raised just under £60 for the paper.

T-shirt 'terrorist' vindicated

PEACE protester John Catt, aged 83, last week had his complaint against the police for searching him as a suspected terrorist by the Independent Police Complaints Authority (IPCC).

John Catt, of Withead in Sussex, had been protesting with others outside the Labour Party conference in Brighton in 2005, wearing a T-shirt with slogans that described George Bush, Tony Blair and Sharon as war criminals, when police stopped and searched him under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

A three-year investigation by the IPCC found the force acted unlawfully. Sussex Police said it would act on the IPCC's guidance.

The IPCC letter said: "It is my view, on the evidence

available that the stop and search was not conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Terrorism Act and as such was unlawful."

John Catt said he was now waiting for an apology from Sussex Police. He added: "If one was less resolved you could probably throw in the towel and forget about it. But then I had to think about all the other people including children who are being stopped.

"And I thought we've got to make a stand here and I'm certainly not going to let these people down as far as I'm concerned."

The anti-terrorist legislation was rushed through Parliament after 11th September 2001 on the understanding that it would be used only against serious threats of ter-

rorism. But it has been used against hundreds of law-abiding peace protesters who pose no threat to anyone.

Titan jails 'dangerous'

THE NATIONAL Council of Independent Monitoring Boards (NCIMB) last week expressed "fundamental doubts" about Government proposals to build giant "Titan" jails in various locations

The prisons watchdog accused ministers of failing to explain why they would save money and warned that they could be dangerous.

The NCIMB said that ministers seem to have ignored any concern for the importance of monitoring conditions in the prisons.

Three new Titan jails, each with up to 2,500 inmates, have been proposed in a bid to ease overcrowding. The NCIMB criticised the Government's consultation on the plan, describing it as a "fait accompli".

It said that trying to manage the jails would cause "major staff problems" and predicted: "There will be major and potentially dangerous consequences if services such as health and education are provided centrally, as it will be difficult to protect the most vulnerable prisoners

from those who might cause them harm."

NCIMB president, Dr Peter Selby, said: "Most of our boards favour smaller units and have negative experience of large establishments and clustering of prisons to achieve efficiency, but at the cost of effective rehabilitation.

"We shall continue to emphasise and carry out our task of monitoring fairness and respect wherever people are imprisoned, and point out the major disadvantages of prisons of a size that present serious management problems."

Other prison groups, such as the Prison Reform Trust, Nacro and the Howard League for Penal Reform are also against the proposals.

The Ministry of Justice is searching for sites of at least 50 acres for jails of four or five storeys, costing an estimated £350 million each. The initial likely locations are London, the West Midlands and the North West.

The current jail-building programme has a target of a total of 96,000 prison places by 2014.

M&S suspends whistleblower

THE HIGH street chain Marks and Spencer last week suspended a worker after he had contacted the media to leak company plans to cut redundancy pay for the firm's 70,000 employees by 25 per cent.

The GMB union says the man, who works at the corporate head office in Central London, has now been suspended and will face a disciplinary hearing next Monday, at which he will be repre-

sented by the union. Marks and Spencer refused to comment on the reports, saying it was "an internal matter and an investigation is under way".

But M&S confirmed that it was consulting staff about cutting the level of redundancy payments, which would limit maximum payouts from 72 weeks to 52 weeks. The GMB claims that M&S wants to change the redundancy payments in advance

of announcing a new wave of redundancies. GMB general secretary Paul Kenny said: "We are fearful that job cuts are on the way at M&S; why else would they cut their existing policy if they did not intend to use it?"

He also accused the company of double standards in its treatment of staff. "Why do people at the bottom get the sack on the cheap, while top bosses get large payouts even when they have messed up?"

Features

DPR Korea: 'one for all and all for one!'

by Han Sol Song

TODAY all members of society in Korea are devotedly working for society and the collective, helping and leading one another forward under the slogan of "One for all and all for one!"

The slogan was held up by the country at the time when the difficult revolutionary task of transforming the old relations of production along socialist lines had been successfully carried out and the socialist system established in Korea.

The motto clarifies the principle of collectivism, the fundamentals of socialism, and the moral relation between the collective and an individual in the socialist society.

It also reflects the need to value the interests of the organisation, the collective and the people more than those of an individual and to work devotedly.

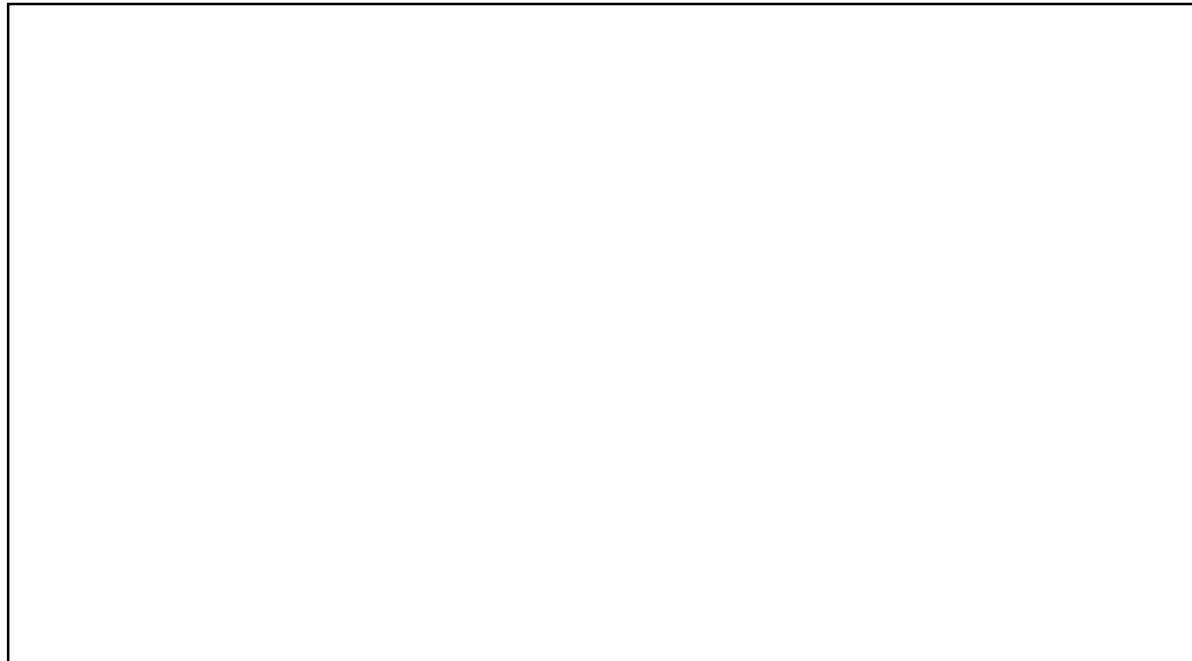
The existence and development of man as a social being are inconceivable apart from the collective.

Man is able to exist and develop and get his independent desire and demands only when he is identified with the social collective. Collectivism is, therefore, the intrinsic demand of man, and the interests of the collective are more valuable than those of an individual. The interests of an individual in the true sense of the word belong to those of the collective, and a genuine worthwhile life of man means working devotedly for the collective, regarding its interests as more valuable than those of an individual.

Man living in the socialist society can acquire an eternal socio-political integrity only when he always values and loves the collective and devotes his all to the interests of the collective.

In the socialist society the demand and interests of the social collective means thoroughly realising the independence of the popular masses.

Man can fully attain his independent desire and demand in the process of valuing and serving the interests of the social collective more than those of his own.



• Korean people love to get together to dance and socialise – these are celebrating in Kim Il Sung Square.

If people only pursue their own interests, the society will fall into disorder and chaos, making it impossible to fully realise the independence of the popular masses and the interests of individuals in the true sense of the

word. If man, as a social being, only seeks enjoyment with no regard to the interests of the society and the collective, he will be forsaken by the society and the collective and meet his end like a fallen leaf.

In the socialist society where it is the social trend to live and work with the common desire and demands to realize the masses' independence, he can glorify his political integrity and lead a worthwhile life only when he devotes his all to the organisation and the collective.

The slogan also reflects the need to veritably improve the destiny of each individual by means of unity and cooperation of the collective. The basic demand of collectivism is to place the interests of the collective before those of an individual, make a harmony of the two kinds of interests and satisfy individual interests by defending those of the collective.

What is in contraposition to collectivism is not the interests of an individual but individualism that only pursues personal interests at the cost of those of the collective.

In the socialist society of Korea that is guided by the man-centred Juche idea, the interests of each individual are valued, and social benefits are granted to all the people to the highest degree, on condition that the interests of the collective are thoroughly defended.

The relations of unity and cooperation among the members of society mirror the true, noble and beautiful image of the socialist society, the embodiment of the collectivist principle.

In Korea, the pleasure and happiness of an individual are those of the collective as a whole, and the sorrow suffered by a member of the collective is regarded as the one of all other members. So they display the traits of helping and leading one another forward.

The care and unselfish cooperation of the collective make it possible to ensure the development and happiness of an individual and alleviate his or her own agony. Consequently an individual, along with the collective, is able to lead a genuine life.

Herein lies the meaning of the slogan "One for all and all for one!"

The slogan is now displaying its vitality as a powerful weapon that stimulates the working people to the endeavours for the building of a great, prosperous and powerful socialist nation in Korea.

Korea Today

Sorrow of War heads for the screen

VIETNAMESE film enthusiasts will finally get to see the beloved war novel *Noi Buon Chien Tranh* [The Sorrow of War] by veteran writer Bao Ninh on the big screen.

The movie is being made by American director and scriptwriter Nicholas Simon. Shooting of the film, which is being produced by Britain's Viet Film, will begin in Vietnam in November.

Bao Ninh is pleased that the movie's script has stayed faithful to his novel. "The only thing I had to do was adjust some of the dialogues to make them more in tune with the war period," he said.

Simon's wealth of experience in film-making will prove beneficial to *The Sorrow of War*, which sees him don the hat of director for the first time. He has been involved in producing various movies such as *The Beautiful Country* by Norwegian director Hans Petter Moland and *Vertical Ray of the Sun* by Vietnamese French director Tran Anh Hung.

Although Simon had nothing to do with the American War in Vietnam, he remembers being impressed and moved by the novel when he first read it more than 10 years ago.

"Over the course of the past 10 years, Simon has visited me many times to discuss how to adapt the novel into a movie. I know Simon's sentiments towards the American War and recognise that he wants to learn more about the Vietnamese people," said the 56-year-old writer, himself also a former soldier of the liberation army.

Ninh and Simon spent a great deal of time discussing various aspects of the movie, which Ninh said may have caused a few delays in the making of the movie as there was a language barrier.



• Bao Ninh

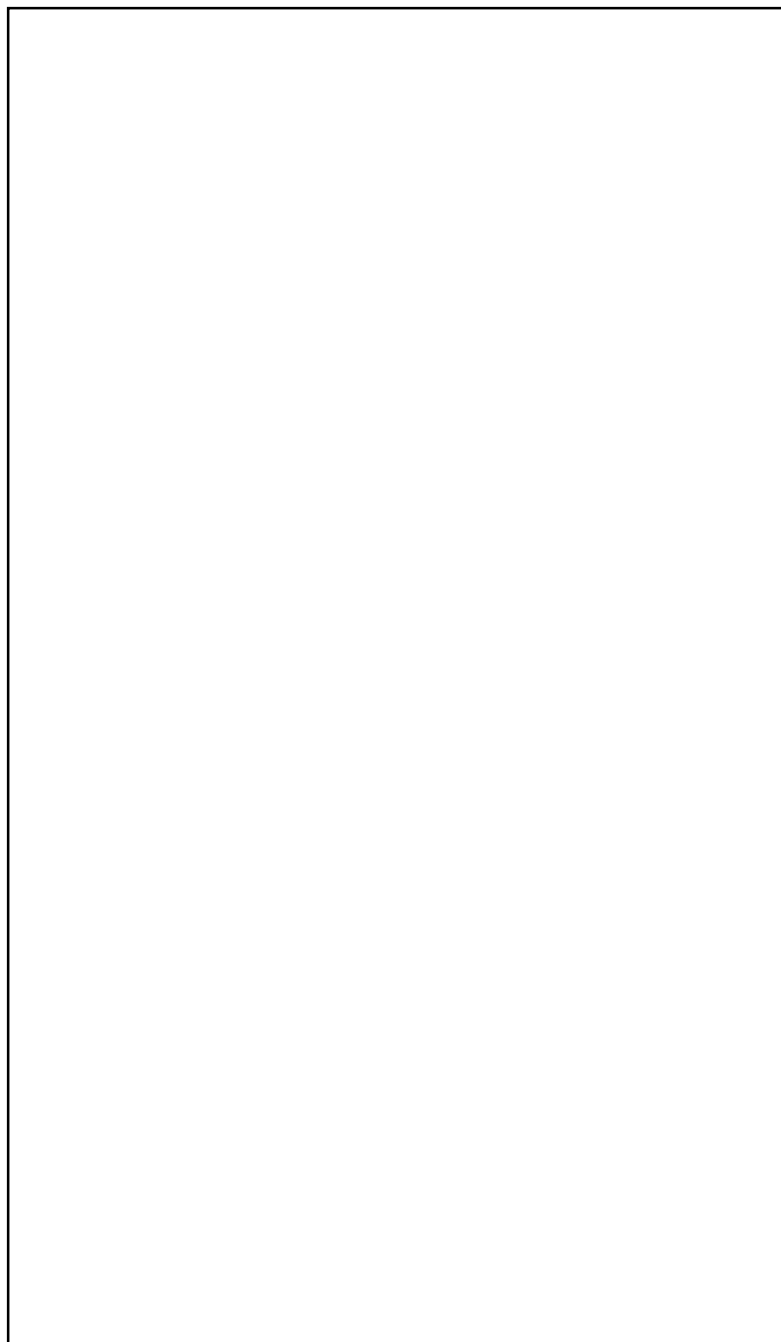
"I don't speak English, certainly not enough to discuss cinematography which requires specific knowledge. We relied on translators and it takes time to translate a script, even if it is a minor detail that needs changing."

Simon worked with scriptwriter Peter Himmelstein to complete the film's script which was approved by Vietnam's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. According to members of the assessment panel the script was: "coherent, emotional and attractive".

To ensure the film's success, carefully screened auditions have been taking place since June. Over 70 young Vietnamese men and women have so far auditioned for select roles. Their portfolios and taped auditions will be sent for final selection by Simon.

The film crew has already selected spots for filming after visiting several locations in Ha Tay, Thai Nguyen, Ninh Binh, Nam Dinh and Hai Phong. The mountainous region of the North has been selected as the most suitable location for filming.

The Sorrow of War won the prize of the Vietnamese Writers' Association in 1991. The Trans-



• Cover of an edition of the book.

lators' Association of the Society of Authors in London ranks it in the top 50 outstanding translations of the last 50 years.

The novel shares space with other foreign classics on the list

like *The Tin Drum* by Gunter Grass, *Labyrinths* by Jorge Luis Borges, *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy and *100 Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. *Vietnam News Service*

by Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

ON 6TH AUGUST a military coup took place in the North African nation of Mauritania. This country, whose affairs receive very little attention in the corporate media in the United States, has been a focal point for the Bush administration's so-called "war on terrorism" in the region.

President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waghf were overthrown and detained by members of the elite regiment whose task it was to protect the leadership of the government. The coup took place only hours after the president attempted to terminate his top military guards.

International response to the coup has been largely negative, with many condemning it. Members of the League of Arab States and the African Union have reportedly held discussions with the apparent coup leader, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.

General Aziz's rise to power came in the aftermath of a government reshuffle that resulted in the appointment of new ministers, many of whom had served with the former Mauritanian leader, Maaouya Ould Taya, who was overthrown in another coup in 2005. General Aziz also initiated the coup that overthrew Ould Taya.

The US role in Mauritania

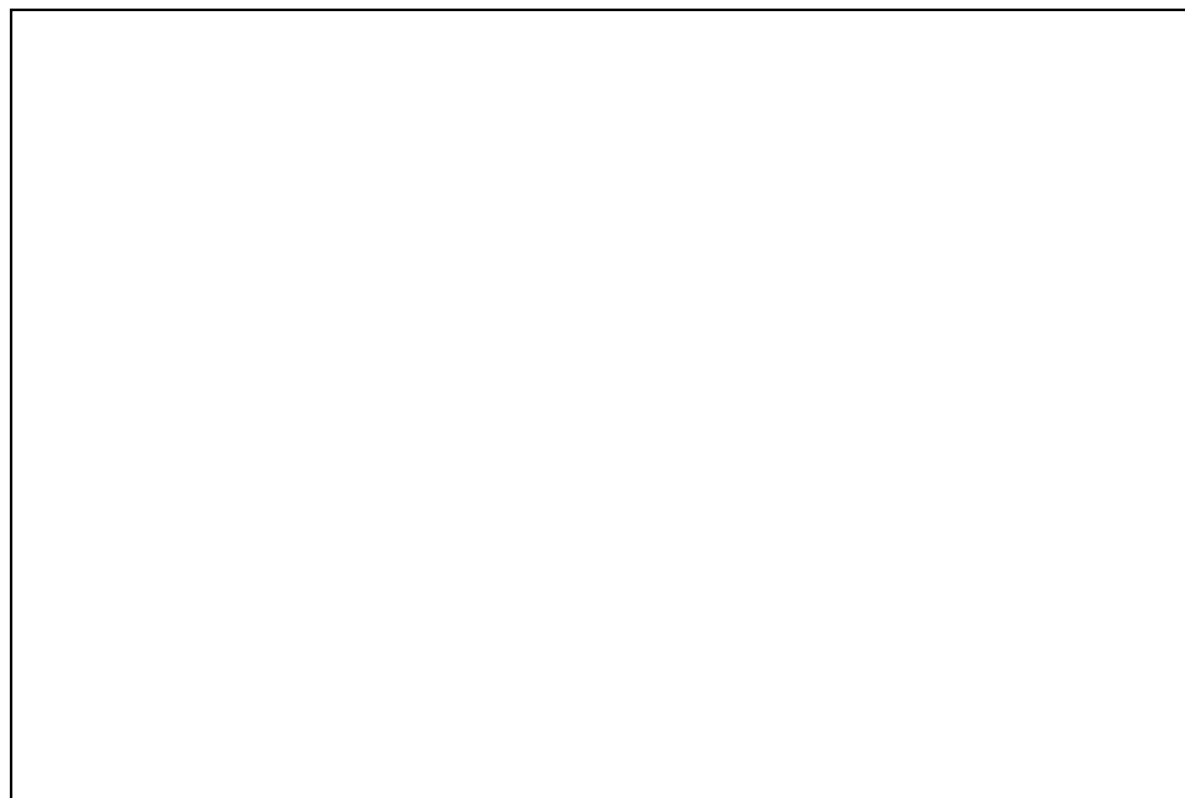
What is most significant in recent political developments in this North African state is the increasing US role under the Bush administration. Mauritania is a former French colony, which was seized during the advent of colonialism in Africa during the 19th century.

During the 1850s-1860s, French military forces took control of the area now known as southern Mauritania. Later, in 1898, France was able temporarily to subdue the population of Moors who had dominated the region politically and economically for centuries. Consequently, in 1904, France established Mauritania as a colonial territory.

Mauritania gained its national independence from France in 1960, alongside many other colonies on the African continent. The 6th August coup was the fifth since the country became an internationally recognised nation. For many years France maintained considerable influence in most of its former colonies in Africa, and Mauritania was no exception. Today the country has a population of three million people including descendants of indigenous Africans, Arabs and Berbers.

In recent years, however, particularly since the Bush administration announced its war on Islamic movements throughout the world, Washington has

Mauritania: coup, anti-terrorism & political instability



sought to establish this former French colony as an outpost for military operations in North Africa. According to the Associated Press on 9th August, "[T]he US sees Mauritania as a bulwark against the encroachment southward of al-Qaeda-linked militants in North Africa. It had sent dozens of troops to train Mauritania's military units in its far northern deserts, but it suspended those programmes in response to the coup."

It is also important to note that as far back as 1999, Mauritania established diplomatic ties with the State of Israel, one of only three members of the Arab League that has done so. Nonetheless, despite the close ties to the US and Israel, the country faces similar

problems as its neighbours in the region.

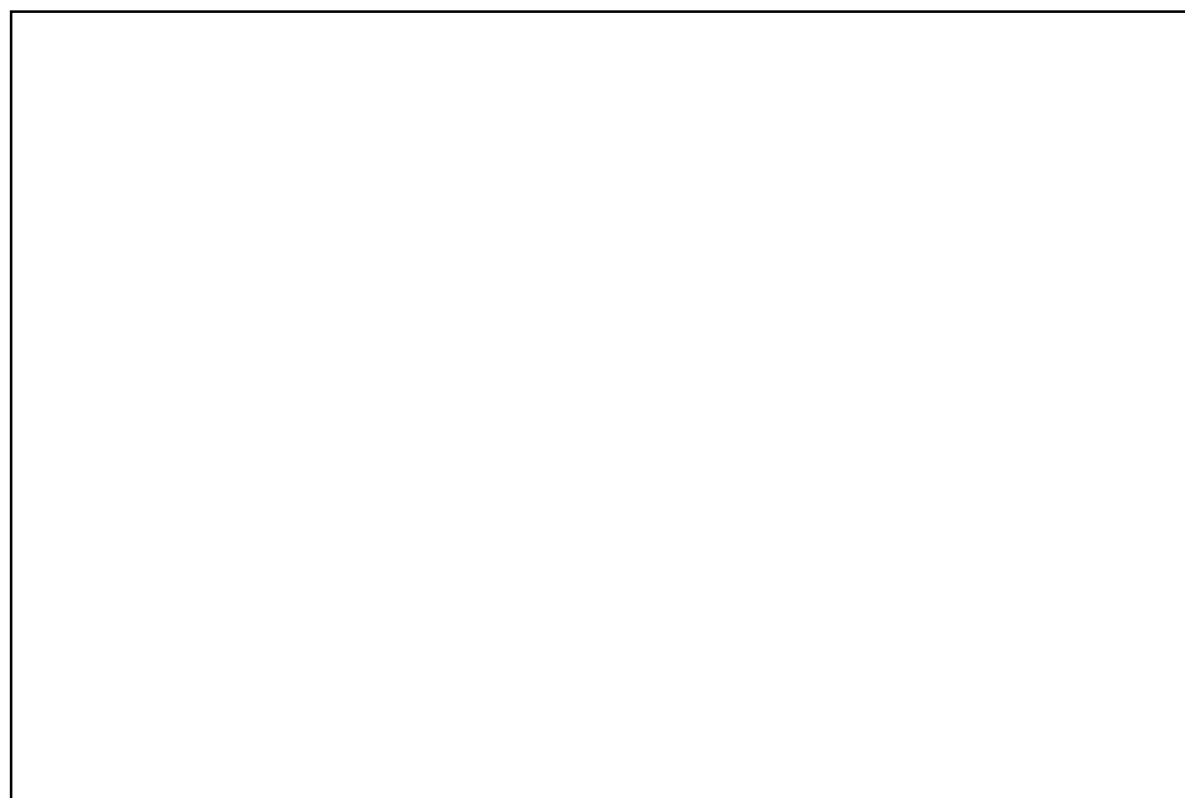
A 7th August report published by the Inter-regional Information Network (IRIN) states that: "Reflecting a global trend, food prices in arid Mauritania have doubled within the past year. In August 2007, thousands were displaced in Mauritania from flooding that wiped out crops and cattle. Months later, food riots broke out in southeast Mauritania."

A Mauritanian graduate student studying in neighbouring Senegal, Boubacar Datt, told IRIN that some relief may occur in the wake of the coup, but people are eager for real change in the country. "What they don't see is that Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was only a

mascot and never had power. People talk about Mauritania being a democracy, but Mauritania has always been led by the military. This coup comes as no surprise. Democracy does not exist. It is only on paper. In daily life, Sidi could not realise his campaign promises," Datt said.

In recent weeks, dissident members within the ruling National Party for the Defence of Democracy attempted to organise a public hearing designed to create a commission to investigate the nation's response to the declining standard of living among the people.

A US-based humanitarian monitoring group, FEWSNET, cited that Mauritania still imports 70 per cent of its food supply.



This problem of internal food production has been exacerbated by the flooding that took place last year that displaced thousands and eliminated crops and livestock. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) predicted that as a result of the rising global prices of food and fuel, the country could experience a high level of hunger and malnutrition.

Discontent fuelled by failed pro-American policies

In recent months there have been several attacks directed against Western targets and the Israeli embassy. Since December 2007, tourism has decreased significantly in the aftermath of a string of attacks, including the murder of four French nationals. Critics of the government inside Mauritania have become more vocal over the character and direction of both domestic and foreign policy.

Taking into consideration the increasingly precarious security situation in Mauritania, the Lisbon-Dakar race-car rally that was scheduled to be held in the country in January was cancelled. Despite the US government claim that it is suspending aid to Mauritania, it is highly unlikely that this suspension will place a damper on Washington's efforts to influence events in the country and throughout North Africa.

Mauritania, like many other African nations, is considered poor and underdeveloped. Nonetheless, there is constant speculation and exploration for natural resources. The country's economy historically has been based on agricultural production and fishing in an increasingly arid landscape.

Since 2006, however, there have been plans underway to exploit the vast offshore oil and natural gas reserves. In addition, the Chinguetti and Tiof fields are expected to produce millions of barrels of oil in the near future. Consequently, this is an important area for the strategic designs of the American ruling class.

Considering the overall aims of the imperialist nations, Mauritania will feature more prominently in the machinations of successive Western bourgeois governments, with Washington taking the lead. Although the oil and natural gas corporations are plotting to make Mauritania a significant base for their long-term objectives of securing global domination, the people in this country and throughout region will continue to seek avenues of resistance to the mounting interference in their internal affairs.

Workers World (US)

• Above: General Aziz speaks to the media.
Left: tanks on the streets.

Home News

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

The cruelty and ruthlessness of modern warfare is not just in those weapons that kill or injure members of the armed forces; there are also the indiscriminate ones that tear apart the bodies of innocent children when they pick them up off the ground, thinking they are toys. I refer to the cluster bombs and land mines that are dropped in their millions in the fields. That is evil enough but that is not the real reason they are used by the war-makers. Their use is more long term; they are an economic weapon against the victim state to prevent their economic recovery in the fight for competition in the world trade markets, since the land cannot be used until the bombs are safely removed, so that the land can be developed again.

Vietnam, Japan, Iraq and many others suffered long after the wars have become history. Princess Diana campaigned against these sorts of evil devices, so it is not surprising that many are suspicious about how she met her death.

I say that the making and use of these weapons must be made a crime against humanity and those who profit by their use should be charged for their crimes.

Yours, George Marsh, South London.

Dear Comrades

Like Mervyn Drage, I believe we should make enormous efforts to build a united mass communist party. This party would then lead the working class in a revolution to overthrow the capitalist system. Hopefully all this will take place before the Conservatives win the 2010 general election.

But just in case we can't organise the revolution inside the next two years, I

suggest that we also do what we can to build up the presently very weak socialist presence in the Labour Party, and to promote whatever policies they have to defend the living standards of working people.

We cannot afford to mouth ultra-leftist slogans about how the two parties are exactly the same. They are not.

Yours fraternally, Edwin Bentley, Hampshire.

Dear comrades

Regarding the criticism made of comrade L Black by Kevin Bell in the letters page of the New Worker I would like to make the following comments.

I think a Tory government would be little or no different to the present New Labour government. It is fairly difficult for things to get worse though I guess dialectically this is possible.

The Blair-Brown regime has carried out more privatisations than either Thatcher or Major did.

There is actually very little left for David Cameron and his Tories to "radically reform" (in other words cut, privatise or smash up). New Labour is even going to abolish incapacity benefit and force the unemployed to pick up litter.

To public sector workers the New Labour government is the main enemy, it is cutting public sector pay in real terms and making huge cutbacks of five per cent per annum in departmental budgets.

Only stupid people would vote for such a party. New Labour abolished the married couples' tax allowance and replaced it with tax credits only available to those with children and very complicated to claim, with frequently money being clawed back due to "over-payments". Prescription charges have shot through the roof as has council tax. Now food and energy prices are rising rapidly.

The Wilson Labour government in the 60s cut public spending and tried to hold down wage demands and the 1974-1979 Labour government cut public spending and operated pay restraint, which was really pay cuts.

Apathy and depoliticisation set in amongst the working class as a result of Labour's failures with people saying "they are all the same", "these socialists are no different to the other lot" and "politicians are just in to make money".

This view increased 10-fold with the advent of New Labour and now most workers do not bother with politics. For communists and the Left to win back trust from working people they must break with the mould of Labourism and social democracy.

The Labour Party formed as the LRC was actually the Right of continental social democratic and socialist parties. It rejected Marxism and class struggle right from the start. Ideology should be the determining factor not the number of trade union affiliations.

The only nominally Marxist component of the LRC, the Social Democratic Federation, left the LRC in 1911 and formed the British Socialist Party which became the CPGB in 1920. To argue for uncritical support of Labour is to go back 97 years!

Yours fraternally, Dermot Hudson, South London.

Dear Comrades

The Scottish National Party victory in Glasgow East was, surely, a vote for an independent Scotland.

There is no way forward in British politics.

Scotland would be well advised to declare independence within the Euro-zone, abolishing the played-out pound, which is issued there by private banks.

These banks are owned by the descendants of those who drove the native people into the sea.

The euro? From its introduction as the ecu I saw it as the saving grace of the European Economic Community.

When Northern Ireland adopts it the reunification of Ireland will be a mere formality.

What do other readers think?

Mick Kenny, Yorkshire.

Dear Comrades

What a very odd letter by Kevin Bell in New Worker 1498, in which he attempts to justify the policy of voting for the Labour Party, sorry, New Labour.

The Labour Representation Committee has, to quote from its own website "... been reformed to secure a voice for socialists within the Labour Party".

Fine, this is admirable, and excellent MPs like John McDonnell do a first rate job in trying to secure this aim, and the NCP is right to support this aim.

However actually voting for New Labour, a capitalist party which in its present form is an absolutely rabid supporter of big business, is wrong.

Do other left wing, far left and ultra left parties recommend voting for a blatantly right wing capitalist party? No, of course not. Vote for a party whose leaders openly admire Thatcher and who would probably agree to a state funeral when she snuffs it? No, of course not.

Lenin and Stalin must be turning in their graves.

Yours fraternally, L Black, South Wales.

Dear Comrades

Having read JH Edwards' letter concerning Shostakovich and Stalin (New Worker 1498 letters) I looked up Solomon Volkov and his Testimony, which Comrade Edwards quotes, on the Web.

I found Testimony, which is supposed to have been dictated by Shostakovich and denounces Stalin, is controversial to say the least. It is described as "a hoax exposed in the 1980s" and Volkov as "an embittered defector".

Wikipedia suggests it should "be taken with a grain of salt".

Best wishes, Ben Johnson, South London.

Dear Comrades

Some correspondents to this page do not seem to understand the difference between a mass party - which inevitably will contain a wide spectrum of views - and a vanguard party - in which members adhere to democratic centralism and have a clearly defined Marxist-Leninist political line that they understand and which equips them to give a lead to the mass movement. Read Lenin's One Step Forward, Two Steps Back and Party of a new type.

Our correspondents are all eager to set about the task of building a mass party/movement but do not say how they intend to accomplish this when they spurn to work alongside even the best of the reformist Left - as are found in the Labour Representation Committee.

The LRC is not revolutionary - and its members stand little chance of becoming revolutionary if we never engage with them in discussion and debate. And working alongside them on equal terms in various struggles: for peace, against fascism, for trade union rights, housing and so on, affords the best possible opportunity to supply the theory to go with the experience of practical campaigning.

If Marxist-Leninists want to promote a mass revolutionary movement we have to talk to people who do not already share our views. LRC members at least have some idea; the real challenge comes from young workers who do not yet have any understanding of class politics. They're not going to find out by telepathy. We have to communicate. That means getting stuck in alongside others in struggle and those not yet in struggle - not standing aloof in some idle, romantic, purist dream of revolution.

Yours in comradeship,

Daphne Liddle, London.

Dear Comrades

I would just like to reply briefly to Kevin Bell's letter (22nd August 2008). As communists we go way beyond the bourgeois parliament because we realise, following Lenin, that under capitalism, Parliament, the state, the police, the security services and the armed forces are coercive institutions of the ruling class that function to oppress, exploit and control the working class.

This is why we seek to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism and working class state power, an entirely different state system, set up and controlled by the Communist Party and the working class.

As communists we should make building the communist movement and creating communist unity our two most important priorities. But we must never isolate ourselves from the working class, so we should also work hard in broad left, socialist societies and the trade unions to spread the communist message.

With this interpretation of the way forward, I can understand why the NCP decided to affiliate to the Labour Representation Committee; it is a matter of strategy and tactics. However I was just trying to point out that communists should not make working with the broad lefts and other social democratic bodies their number-one priority.

On the question of voting Labour, it makes little difference, because both major parties in Britain thoroughly support the capitalist state apparatus.

Diary

- MONDAY 1 September Stop the War. Tony Benn speaking. 6.30pm, Silvestrian Club, Silvester St, Vauxhall, Liverpool. Ticket only. Merseyside STWC. MONDAY 1 September Afghanistan - the good war? 7.30pm, Brent Trades Hall (Apollo Club), 375 High Rd, Willesden, London NW10. Brent STWC. WEDNESDAY 3 September Afghanistan. 7.30pm, Methodist Church, Station Rd, Erdington. SUNDAY 7 September Burston School Strike Rally. 11am to 4.30pm, Church Green, Burston nr Diss, Norfolk. Unite plus SERTUC. TUESDAY 16 September Victory in Nepal. CP Gajurel. 7pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London. Britain-South Asia Solidarity Forum. THURSDAY 18 September Concert for peace. Wihan String Quartet. St Cyprian's Church, Glentworth St, London NW1. £12/£10. SATURDAY 20 September Protest the cost of the war. 12.30pm. Manchester. STWC & CND. www.manchestertothewar.org

We already have authoritarian, repressive rule in Britain and the state and armed forces are currently implementing imperialist acts of aggression across the world in alliance with the United States and Nato. That is why the anti-imperialist work of the communists, and in particular the New Worker is crucial for our future success.

Yours in comradeship, Mervyn Drage, Manchester.

On the Web...

- New Worker National - www.newworker.org NCP Central - www.geocities.com/ncpcentral London District NCP - http://londoncommunists.blogspot.com/ Brighton NCP - http://brightoncommunists.blogspot.com/ NCP-PCS - www.geocities.ncppcs/pcs1.html

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Anthrax spores came from US weapons labs

by Hillel Cohen

LAST WEEK a United States Justice Department spokesperson announced that the anthrax case of 2001 was closed following the suicide of Dr Bruce Ivins, who the Justice Department and the FBI now claim was the sole perpetrator. Dr Ivins' attorney as well as family and friends deny the charges. Whether or not Dr Ivins was involved in the anthrax release remains to be seen. No one should jump to the conclusion that Dr Ivins' suicide was an admission of guilt.

No indictment had been made prior to Ivins' suicide. One can only speculate whether his death has given the government the opportunity to claim the case is closed, by focusing charges on a dead man who cannot defend himself in court and who cannot reveal what has been going on behind the closed doors of the military biological weapons lab where he worked until his death.

Shortly after the 9-11 attacks, weaponised anthrax spores were mailed to Senate Democrat Tom Dashle, NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw and several others. Both were considered liberals and targets of ultra-right talk radio show hosts. The anthrax letters never reached the intended targets. Instead, high-speed mail sorting machines pressed spores outside the envelopes, and the deadly

spores infected some postal workers and individuals whose mail just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

When the first cases of anthrax became public, the media tried to blame "Muslim terrorists". Then Vice President Dick Cheney and other Bush officials and media pundits tried to link the anthrax to Iraq, citing unnamed "experts" who falsely claimed the anthrax had chemicals that were only found in Iraq. Several months later the FBI started leaking to the media that the anthrax almost assuredly came from a U.S. military biological weapons lab in Fort Detrick, Maryland.

At first the name of Dr Ayaad Asaad, a scientist of Egyptian ancestry, was leaked. Then Dr. Steven Hatfill was named as a "person of interest." The same types of unsubstantiated circumstantial "facts" were spread through the media as are now appearing about Dr Ivins. The Justice Department has now stated they were wrong about Hatfill and have given him over \$5 million to settle the lawsuit he brought against the US government.

We may never find out which individual or individuals actually put anthrax spores in the mail. But all the evidence points to the US government biological warfare laboratories at Fort Detrick. The US bio-weapons programme is clearly respon-

sible for the deaths, illnesses and panic that took place in 2001.

What is anthrax?

Anthrax is a bacterial disease that is relatively common in agricultural areas. When anthrax infects the skin (the most common natural form), it is treatable with ordinary antibiotics and is usually not life threatening. If spores are breathed in through the lungs, however, anthrax can be very deadly.

During the Second World War, the US developed a huge biological weapons industry under the leadership of the then-head of Merck pharmaceutical company. Ordinary anthrax bacteria were mass-produced and converted into dried spores that could be spread through the air. It was an advanced industrial process, and to this day only a few countries have been able to do it. This so-called weapons-grade anthrax is hard to make and even harder to handle and store.

The difficulty in making and handling biological-weapons-grade material is what has made biological terrorism more fiction than fact. But this material is readily available in military-sponsored US research labs. These labs supposedly study defence against biological weapons, but they may also be involved in recreating biological-weapons capability for the

the weaponised anthrax spores that killed five people would never have been available. After 2001 enormous amounts of money were diverted from real health needs to research these biological warfare materials. And the danger of future releases, whether accidental or on purpose, has increased greatly, while spending on public health has declined.

Despite years of claims that bio-terrorism is a major health threat, there have so far been no deaths in the US or anywhere else from biological terrorism — other than the five anthrax deaths in 2001. These deaths can be attributed to so-called bio-terrorism defence.

In short the Pentagon and its research divisions, the politicians that fund them, and those scientists and health professionals who took the money to do the dirty work should be held responsible for the anthrax deaths in 2001 — no matter which hands stuffed the envelopes with the deadly spores.

The writer is a Doctor of Public Health.

Workers World (US)

• Anti-biological warfare suits on Capitol Hill.

US in clear violation of the Biologic and Toxin Weapons Convention to which the US is a signatory.

Starting in 1997, the number of US labs funded to research anthrax expanded greatly. Without these labs,

• Mauricio Funes greets supporters.

A good option for El Salvador

TO PUT TOGETHER a government favouring the poor is the fundamental objective of the programme presented by the presidential candidate put forward by the Farabundo Marti Front for the Liberation of El Salvador. If elected, Mauricio Funes will try to restore dignity to the destitute people forgotten throughout the years of neo-liberal policies.

El Salvador has suffered at the hands of the current president, Antonio Saca, one of the main allies of the United States in the region. To counteract this the new program drawn up by Funes, after ten months of serious and hard work involving 31 work commissions made up of the different sectors of the country, offers hope and change to the poorest country in the region.

The reality of Saca's term in office is that the economy has declined and public debt and inflation have increased. Likewise, unemployment has grown at the same time that

the Salvadorians have seen lately how their purchasing power has been reduced. According to some experts, the Salvadorians have lost 56 per cent of the capacity to buy food.

Poverty tops the list of serious problems affecting the Central American nation; 58 per cent of the Salvadorian population lives below the poverty line, a situation that leads to 720,000 leaving the country every year while 70 per cent of the families remaining have to live off remittances sent from abroad.

That's why the candidate of the Farabundo Marti Front for the Liberation of El Salvador — the favourite to win in the elections to be held in March 2009 -- has devised a programme of action and social, economic and political reforms aimed at giving back hope to the Salvadorian people with real results.

The increase of personal pensions, the creation of the Solidarity Fund for the Elderly,

the end of corruption and the creation of new sources of decent jobs to bring down the high levels of unemployment in the country are some of the essential issues on which Funes will focus if he gets elected.

Another of the fundamentals of his programme is to keep an open foreign policy that would enable relations with other nations like Cuba, whose relations were broken in 1961, encouraged by the US.

Actually, the governmental programme presented by Mauricio Funes — a prominent Salvadorian journalist — is an injection of optimism for a people who have witnessed how the different administrations never implemented the amendments enshrined in the peace accord of 1992, which was supposed to put in motion a democratic system and respect for human rights.

Radio Havana Cuba

• Palestinians (left) welcome *Free Gaza* and *Liberty*.

Solidarity boats arrive in Gaza

ON 23RD AUGUST two boats, the *Free Gaza* and the *Liberty*, arrived in the shores of Gaza, carrying 44 international solidarity activists from numerous countries in an effort to break the siege of Gaza and to bring attention to Israeli atrocities and crimes against the Palestinian people.

The boats were welcomed by the Palestinian people and particularly by Palestinians in Gaza, who organised receptions and celebrations to welcome the boats, which carried humanitarian and medical supplies meant

for Gaza. The action by international solidarity activists came as an attempt to physically break the siege of Gaza by delivering these items via ship.

The occupation forces and the Israeli government threatened the boats and interfered with their communications equipment, but seeing the determination of the participants to continue and fearing the potential of large-scale negative media attention, did not attack the boats or force them back as they landed at the Gaza shore.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) participated in the

celebrations welcoming the solidarity boats. The Front saluted these activists and the international solidarity groups with the Palestinian people around the world, and called for more such actions to break the siege on a popular level.

A broad array of Palestinian and Arab organisations, movements and popular associations welcomed the action by these international activists, including both de facto governments in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

PFLP

THE NEW WORKER

International News

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Mass protests at US Democratic Convention

THOUSANDS of protesters have converged on Denver, Colorado, where the Democratic National Convention got underway on Monday. At a march and rally held on Sunday, organised by the group Recreate 68, the protesters temporarily blocked access to the convention site before police ordered the crowd to disperse.

Speakers at the rally included anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan, Green Party presidential nominee Cynthia McKinney, and Vietnam veteran and anti-war activist Ron Kovic.

Jeremy Scahill, a correspondent with the popular radio and TV programme Democracy Now, says: "The city of Denver has been converted to a massive monument celebrating Barack Obama. This weekend, some 4,000 delegates to the Democratic National Convention began flooding the city for the much-anticipated coronation of the man chosen by the Democrats to face John McCain in November." He said that there are about 15,000 journalists to cover the convention.

most expensive

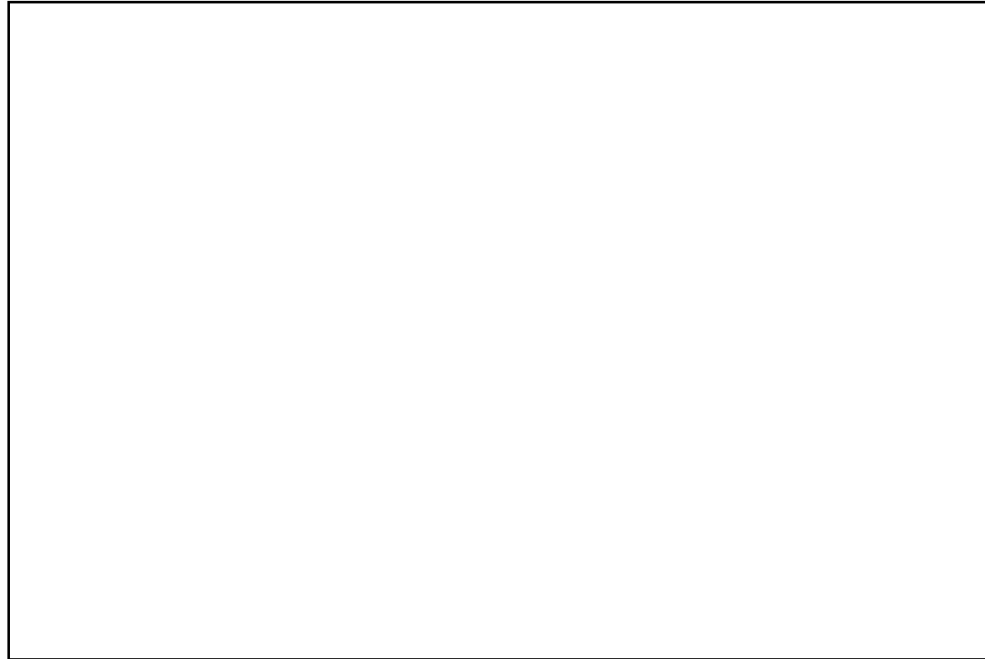
Scahill said: "The convention could be described as one big political NASCAR stock car race, with corporate logos splashed on practically everything related to the big show." He emphasised that the total cost of the convention could well top \$100 million – on track to be the most expensive political convention in US history.

Over the weekend, just two days before the convention opened in Denver, Barack Obama announced that he had chosen Joseph Biden as his running mate. The vice presidential candidate has served in the Senate since 1972 and is the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In 2002, Biden was one of 29 Democratic senators to vote to authorise the invasion of Iraq. He later said his vote was a mistake. Biden has also taken the controversial position of advocating for the partitioning of Iraq into three or more regions.

Independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader described Biden as the "MasterCard Senator". One of Biden's biggest corporate backers is the Delaware-based credit card company MBNA. Biden was the key architect of the 2005 bankruptcy law which made it harder for consumers to file for bankruptcy protection. At the time, Biden's son was working as a consultant to MBNA.

Radio Havana Cuba

Russia recognises South Ossetia and Abkhazia



• Abkhazians celebrate the Russian decision.

RUSSIA has recognised the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia following an unanimous vote in favour in the Federation Council and the State Duma of Russia.

"The people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia have repeatedly supported their independence. We understand that they have a right to determine their fate themselves after what happened recently," Russian President Dimitri Medvedev said in a televised address on Tuesday.

"They wrote to Russia with a request to recognise their independence. Taking into consideration the free will of the peoples, the UN Charter and OSCE documents, I have signed decrees to recognise the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on behalf of the Russian Federation. This is the only way to save people's lives," Medvedev said.

Medvedev compared Saakashvili's actions with the position of a former Georgian President, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who unleashed the war under the slogan "Georgia for Georgians".

"Saakashvili chose geno-

cide to fulfill his political plans," Medvedev said. "Georgia chose the least human way to achieve its goal to absorb South Ossetia by eliminating a whole nation."

"Russia stopped the extermination by the Georgian people and then showed restraint with a goal to regulate the conflict through diplomacy," the president said.

warnings

"Our warnings were left with no response. Nato and the UN ignored them. It is clear now that the Georgian administration was preparing for the war, whereas the support of its external protectors was only strengthening the feeling of impunity. The Georgian administration chose another way – to disrupt negotiations, launch military provocations and attack peacemakers. The Georgian administration initiated a military conflict in defiance of common sense and contrary to the UN Charter," Medvedev said.

"The president's decision is a response to those political speculators who claimed that Russia needed new lands; who referred to Russia as an invader and who said

that Russia was going to annex Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states is a rejection of annexation," Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's ambassador to Nato said in a statement.

The presidents of the now-recognised republics, Sergei Bagapsh and Eduard Kokoity, thanked Medvedev for his decision and in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, the capitals of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the people took to the streets to celebrate the news.

Russia's decision to recognise the independence of the two republics came out of the blue for its citizens. People started making countless phone calls to share their joy. Everyone started to congratulate each other after Medvedev's televised address.

Cars blared their horns and people fired guns in the air celebrating their long-awaited independence in Tskhinvali. Others waved the flags of the republic, hugging and congratulating each other.

Pravda.ru

Sweet victory for Nestlé workers

A THREE-DAY strike by 200 workers at Nestlé Hong Kong's ice cream and chilled products factory ended in victory, as management finally agreed to workers' demands on wages and working conditions. The striking workers, including drivers, deliverymen, sales force workers and production workers, joined the IUF-affiliated [food workers international] Catering & Hotels Industries Employees General union and launched industrial action on 27th July. The workers demand a 12-hour limit on working hours, permanent employment for casual workers, a seven per cent wage increase and a six per cent increase in commission (above-quota incentive pay).

Over the past 12 years earnings from commissions have been cut by 12 per cent despite a significant increase in workload and working hours, which has now reached 17-hour workdays. On top of this management was constantly changing the formula for calculating commissions and refused to disclose the new calculation, leaving workers unable to determine what their commissions should be at the end of each month.

The strike brought production to a halt at the height of peak season and shocked the Hong Kong public by exposing the appalling working conditions in the world's largest food manufacturing company. This includes 17-hour workdays, wage increases over the past 12 years amounting to just one per cent, and the systematic de-

nial of permanent employment for casual workers despite working at the factory for more than 10 years.

For more than a decade a third of the workforce at Nestlé Hong Kong have been employed under precarious employment practices that deliberately bypass the legal requirement that a worker be made permanent after employment of more than 12 months.

Casual workers were placed on revolving 12-month contracts, and to prevent them from achieving permanent employment status under the law Nestlé Hong Kong management imposed a 14-day break between each contract.

As a result workers were robbed of any employment security and were deliberately denied the rights, protection and benefits enjoyed by permanent workers under the law.

At the request of the Catering & Hotels Industries Employees General Union, an affiliate of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), the IUF intervened to bring these abusive employment practices to the attention of Nestlé global management and called for the management to enter into good faith negotiations with the union.

In the second round of negotiations on 29th July, the union succeeded in winning major improvements in wages and working conditions and reached a settlement that was supported by all 200 workers, who voted to end the strike action.

Guardian Australian communist weekly

Raul Castro welcomes back Cuban Olympians

PRESIDENT Raul Castro welcomed the last group of Cuban athletes returning to Cuba on Monday at Havana's Jose Marti International Airport.

The last group of athletes were made up by representatives from track and field, women's volleyball and beach volleyball, baseball, boxing, divers, canoe and taekwondo.

Baseball players Pedro Luis Lazo and Alexei Bell, boxer Emilio Correa, all Silver medallist in the world

event and Leonel Suarez, Bronze medallist in the Decathlon, carried the Cuban flag while stepping down from the airplane that brought them back to the island.

On behalf of the entire Cuban delegation, Bell read a message from the athletes upon their return to their country.

"We had a common objective, to fight for a victory in one of the strongest and most complex Olympic Games in history," said the baseball star.

Regarding the boxing competitions, three times Olympic and World Champion Teofilo Stevenson characterised the boxing performance in Beijing as very good as they were able to qualify 8 out of the 10 boxers to the semi finals.

Stevenson attributed the success to the preparation and experience of the Cuban boxing trainers. He stressed that the refereeing at the bouts were very bad, especially the competition in which Emilio Correo participated in

and said he is not satisfied with those results.

According to Teofilo Stevenson the young Cuban boxers have a great future and the island will recover the world and Olympic supremacy in the discipline.

Teofilo Stevenson is currently the supervisor of referees for AIBA, the International Boxing Referees Association.

Pedro Roque, trainer of the Cuban boxers agrees with Stevenson, characterising the refereeing as a di-

saster and horrible, which not only affected the Cuban boxers but also Ecuador, France and some other countries.

Also participating in the warm reception were the Minister of Informatics and Communication, Ramiro Valdez, Lazara Mercedes Lopez, member of the Secretariat of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee and Julio Martinez, the first secretary of the National Committee of the Young Communist League.

Radio Havana Cuba

